

Dan or Beersheba, who butter their bread at dinner and like their stake fried. Now, for once, I am going to have somebody nice and interesting."

A young, unmarried preacher, for instance," suggested Mr. Clayton; "will you take him from the Seminary?"

"Not any, I thank you," she answered, with a little tilt of her pretty nose; "young preachers are a trial; I wish they could be born fifty years old."

"Very well; come down to the office, Miss Ellen and we'll go over the list with you and fit you out."

It was nearing the hour now for her appointment with Mr. Clayton, but Ellen must give her room a few more little pats and touches before she was satisfied that it was looking its best, from the pictures—framed in white and gold—on the walls to the dainty blue rugs on the shining floor.

"It's real nice to feel that I am to entertain a piece of Synod my own self," she thought, trying a new effect of gilt chair and Shakespeare table. And so fascinating was this decorative work that Ellen came panting into Mr. Clayton's office ten minutes after the appointed time.

The names of delegates were printed on long slips, and Ellen was even more interested in the pursuit of a guest, up and down these columns, than in the adornment of "my lady's bower."

"Here's the very man for you, Miss Ellen," cried the chairman, presently; "I knew only to-day of his coming, or he would have been snapped up long ago. He is an Englishman, from the China Island Mission; a great traveler, a famous author, and a perfectly charming fellow. I congratulate you beforehand."

"Oh! how nice," said Ellen. "Now tell me how we can find him among the four-hundred, and how he can find us."

But before the committee's plan of action could be explained to her another visitor came into the office; it was the pastor of the church.

"Ah! good-morning, my dear," he said to Ellen. "Excuse me for interrupting you, Clayton. Just a single question, please—have you found a place for my old ladies?"

"No, Doctor; I am sorry to say I have not. People do not seem to consider old ladies an integral part of Synod, you see, and everybody wants delegates."

"That's very natural," said the pastor, looking disappointed and perplexed; "but this does seem to me a special case: Miss Susan and Miss Phillippa Parke are the daughters of old Father Parke, who was pastor of this church when the Synod

met here just fifty years ago. The old man is nearly ninety, far too feeble to be present himself, but he has set his heart on his daughter's coming, and it would be cruel in us to disappoint him."

"We can send them to the Central Hotel," suggested Mr. Clayton.

"We can, of course; but I'm sure you see, Clayton, that it would not do. They never heard of being entertained at a hotel during a church meeting. I ought to have them at the parsonage, of course, and would be delighted to entertain them, but its nearness to the church has obliged us to fill it to overflowing with the halt, the maimed, and the blind. Well, if we cannot do any better—"

"But, Doctor," said the sweet girlish voice, "you *can* do better; I have got a blue-and-gold room all ready for your old ladies. Tell me now, please, how to get hold of them."

"Better, indeed!" exclaimed the delighted pastor. "This is what I call *best*, my dear."

Mr. Clayton did not say anything, but his glance was full of loving praise. Perhaps he knew something of the fight which had raged in Ellen's heart between her eager, selfish desire to have the great man and the call of duty to take these old ladies. Neither he nor Ellen knew how sweet the victory and reward were to be.

The F. & O. train reached Inframont just at dusk, and at dusk on Tuesday evening every Presbyterian home in the town, and numbers of homes belonging to other denominations were in apple-pie order, with doors wide open to receive the inpour of guests.

Dr. Hopkins himself (the pastor) brought Ellen's old ladies to her door, and the very cockles of his heart glowed as he ushered them into the cozy library, where Ellen and her mother met them like old friends.

They were a little dazed by the brilliancy of their surroundings, not only because they had come in from the dark streets, but because they had come from the plainest of little country homes; but nobody could resist our Ellen's caressing touch and tone and the mother's simple, cordial sweetness of manner and the father's boisterous heartiness and the curiosity and genuine interest of the romping children. Before tea was over Miss Susan and Miss Phillippa were as much at home as Ellen, and apparently as young and happy.

They went out to hear the opening sermon, of course, personally conducted by several old farming elders (from Dan and Beersheba?) with whom they had many interests in common. And after the his-

toric, the semi-centennial sermon, in which the tender mention of their father made their dear old cheeks wet with happy tears, the Synod was formally organized, the roll was called, and the moderator chosen. Then the great congregation sang "Praise God, from whom all blessings flow," and separated.

But before they separated there was an informal, and indeed unexpected reception held, not by the retiring moderator, though he had preached a glorious sermon; not by the newly-elected moderator, though he was the most distinguished member of Synod; not even by the famous traveler who had come so near being quartered in "my lady's bower," but by these two old-fashioned, modest old maids, who knew almost every preacher in the Synod, and whose names were known by all Inframont.

"You are getting fame and notoriety, after all, Miss Ellen," said a voice at her elbow.

"O Mr. Clayton!" she whispered, turning a glowing face to him, "aren't they old dears? I wouldn't exchange them for a bench of bishops. They have the sweetest voices you ever heard, and they say 'Yes, ma'am,' to me, as people did a hundred years ago. But they know what is going on, too, and are as clever as they are quaint. They dress exactly alike, don't you know, to a pin, but one sister is practical and one is romantic, and both are lovely."

A little later Mr. Clayton reappeared with the lion of the assembly, the missionary traveler, in tow. Evidently the great man had heard something of Ellen which pleased him, and for the rest of the time, during all the days of the meeting, she was his chosen comrade.

"'Virtue is its own reward,'" busy Mr. Clayton found time to whisper.

"Such a very small virtue," she answered, with shining eyes, "such a very big reward!"

Ellen had never enjoyed anything as much in her life as she did those days of Synod. Everybody knows that there are no such genial, whole-souled, high-minded set of fellows in the world as those servants who are engaged directly in the Master's business, and our young girl felt her mind and heart enlarge as she listened to their hopes and plans for the coming of the Kingdom.

But the best part of all was the perfect enjoyment of her old ladies; she had never before had so much pleasure in her blue-and-gold room, and as long as she lives she will never forget the quaint sweetness of Miss Phillippa's words on the last night of her stay in "my lady's bower."

—Elizabeth P. Allen.